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“Not to Be Altered”: Performance’s Efficacy and Audience Reaction in *The Roman Actor*

ERIC DUNNUM

Readers of Philip Massinger’s hyper-self-reflective *The Roman Actor* have long noted, and then struggled to understand, Paris’s inability to use performance to enact change in his audience. In the first of three inset plays, *The Cure for Avarice*, Paris (one of the Roman actors suggested by the title) uses a performance to cure Philargus of his greed and miserliness. Like Hamlet before him, Paris intends to present “on the stage as in a mirror” a character like Philargus, so that he “[m]ay see his own deformity and loathe it” (2.1.98; 99).¹ However, as critics have pointed out, Philargus, unlike Claudius, does not repent or even feel guilty.² Richard A. Burt remarks, “the attempt fails miserably....To be sure, Philargus does identify with the [staged] miser completely. But Philargus does not regard the miser critically.”³ Philargus does eventually disown his dramatic doppelganger, but only because the character repents. “An old fool, to be gulled thus! Had he died / As I resolve to do, not to be altered, / It had gone off twanging” (2.1.407–9). In the end, Philargus remains unaffected (not “altered”) by the performance. What makes this scene so puzzling (and for critics like Jonas Barish—frustrating) is that before Paris’s failed attempt to redeem Philargus, the actor seems to be cast in the role of heroic defender of the stage.⁴ As almost every critic who has written about *The Roman Actor* has noticed, Paris’s defense of the theater in the first act draws on traditional and well-established defenses of literature and the theater.⁵ So when Paris fails, the play seems to be suggesting that a whole tradition of poetic apologetics is also failing. Barish even suggests that Massinger’s play takes an antitheatrical position.⁶ Other critics, not willing to go as far as Barish, argue that Massinger is merely skeptical of drama’s ability

to reform audiences and so is complicating this traditional view of the theater by showing the variety and unpredictability of audience response, or they suggest that Paris's failure is actually a failure of his culture and not of the theater; that is, Paris is a tragic figure whose moral vision of a redemptive and curative theater is corrupted by a dishonest court and ruthless tyrant.⁷

What these critics generally assume is that efficacy is a positive characteristic of drama and so naturally Massinger is either bemoaning theater's loss of efficacy or tracing the creative unpredictability of performance's effect on the audience; however, the historical and political position of early modern theaters complicates this assumption. Efficacy, of the type Paris suggests, connects the actions of the audience with the content of the performance, and early modern Londoners were anxious about the action of playgoers. According to London magistrates and antitheatrical writers, audiences were often immoral, unruly, and occasionally riotous, and these groups relied on arguments like Paris's to blame the theaters for these actions. They viewed the audience's problematic actions as the effect of the stage performance. In this first inset play and similar scenes within the play, Massinger seems to be registering this anxiety about drama's efficacy by purposefully problematizing the relationship between the content of the performance and the actions of the audience. Thus, when the playwright questions the conventional defense of the stage as he does in the first inset performance (and as we will see, all subsequent inset performances), he is not so much bemoaning theater's loss of efficacy as he is constructing performance as ineffective in order to avoid the theater's culpability for the actions of the audience. That is, he is producing a fictive ineffective theater in order to frame the real theater as ineffective.

When critics call Paris's defense of the stage "conventional" or "traditional" what they are often suggesting is that his speech in act 1 is highly indebted to early modern writers such as Thomas Nashe, Thomas Heywood, George Puttenham and, of course, Philip Sidney, all of whom offer arguments similar to Paris's.⁸ For instance, Paris asserts that drama teaches the audience virtuous behavior and that by doing so performance can enact change in the audience.

Do we teach,
By the success of wicked undertakings,
Others to tread in their forbidden steps?
We show no arts of Lydian pandarism,
Corinthian poisons, Persian flatteries,
But mulcted so in the conclusion that
Even those spectators that were so inclined
Go home changed men. (1.3.99–106)

What follows is a list of various vices (adultery, greed, corruption) that Paris believes can be cured through performance. By teaching his audience the consequences of vice, Paris maintains he can change their behavior and move them to virtue. Likewise, Sidney asserts that the ultimate goal of learning should always be virtuous action: “the final end [of learning or wit] is to lead and draw us to as high a perfection as our degenerate souls, made worse by their clayey lodgings, can be capable of.”⁹ For Sidney and Paris learning (or *gnosis*) and action (or *praxis*) should be causally connected; the end of learning is “well-doing and not...well-knowing only.”¹⁰ Poetry plays a key role in making this connection (more so than philosophy or history) because it delights the audience, and through this delight, moves the delighted audience to imitate what they see.¹¹

Following M. H. Abrams, we can call this view of literature or more narrowly drama, the pragmatic theory of performance since, in Abrams’s words, it “looks at the work of art chiefly as a means to an end, an instrument for getting something done, and tends to judge its value according to its success in achieving that aim ... to effect requisite responses in its readers.”¹² Abrams finds that this was the dominant theory of literature in the early modern era, a theory he traces to Aristotle, Horace, Cicero, and the Church Fathers.¹³ And although Abrams does not use the term *humanism*, the pragmatic theory of literature is clearly indebted to humanism’s belief in the near perfectibility of human beings and poetry’s role in this project.¹⁴ Massinger, then, seems to be explicitly referring to a conventional and established defense of literature that has its roots in one of the dominant pedagogical and ideological trends of the day; he then problematizes this theory by dramatizing an instance in which it fails.

Massinger had good reason to reject the pragmatic theory of performance. In early modern London, this theory did not necessarily provide a defense of or apology for the theater as the fictional Paris and the real Sidney maintained; it may have actually threatened the playhouses and the profession of the playwright. If playwrights were to accept the connection between praxis and gnosis, then they would be taking responsibility for the actions of their audiences, and the actions of early modern playgoers were often associated with riotous and seditious behavior. Furthermore, linking plays with these actions would play into the hands of the theater's enemies, in particular Puritan antitheatrical writers and London magistrates, who, like Paris's enemy in the play, Aretinus, wished to "silence us [actors] for ever" (1.1.38). Like Aretinus, these groups often held playwrights and the playing companies responsible for the unruly actions of the audiences.

For instance, in 1597 a warrant was issued for Ben Jonson and Thomas Nashe after their play *The Isle of Dogs* incited a riot at the Swan. The Privy Council describes the disturbance as "very great disorders committed in the common playhouses both by lewd matters that are handled on the stage and by resort and confluence of bad people."¹⁵ Here the council is making a distinction between the actions of the "bad people" and the "lewd matters that are handled on the stages," but the implication of the Privy Council's ruling is that if these "bad people" create a disturbance, it is playwrights' and playing companies' fault because they staged the "lewd matters." This connection between the actions on stage (gnosis) and the actions in the audience (praxis) created the premise that allowed the Privy Council to punish the theaters for the actions of their audiences. In fact, the state did not just attempt to punish the playwrights; in reaction to the riot, the Privy Council ordered that all theatrical productions be halted and that all the playhouses be torn down.¹⁶ For reasons that remain unclear, the latter order was, thankfully, never carried out, but Glynne Wickham has convincingly argued that the threat of destruction and the negotiations that followed resulted in the bankruptcy of several theaters and playing companies including Pembroke's Men, the company responsible for *The Isle of Dogs*.¹⁷ The Privy Council's reaction (or overreaction) to the playhouse riot illustrates that if playgoers misbehaved, the playwright's profession and livelihood could be destroyed.

The Privy Council's 1597 order is unique in its harshness and in its explicit connection between the actions of the audience and the actions on the stage. Often the connection being made between the two is more tenuous. For instance, five years earlier, the Privy Council had closed the theaters after a riot near The Rose. This riot actually had very little to do with playgoing. A fellmonger was arrested, and under the pretext of attending a play, a group of his fellow fellmongers gathered in order to free him from Marshalsea Prison. The gathering turned into a violent riot when the Knight Marshal's men attacked the group. To avoid similar disturbances, all the playhouses were closed from Midsummer Day to Michaelmas (21 June 1592 through 29 September 1592).¹⁸

Beyond providing us with evidence that the London authorities sometimes punished the playing companies for the actions of their audiences, the fellmonger's anecdote also suggests an early modern cultural association between playgoing and riots. Crowds that wished to mount protests gravitated toward the theaters, located in the suburbs where unruly behavior was concentrated.¹⁹ Or sometimes groups of individuals used playgoing as an excuse to assemble.²⁰ It seems early modern theaters, like today's town squares or capitol buildings, were a good place to gather if you wished to protest. For instance, in 1618 a group of sailors were accused of planning to riot (that is, they assembled) outside The Globe. The riot, however, was stopped before it began.²¹ And on 16 May 1626, just a few months before Massinger wrote *The Roman Actor*, a group of protesters gathered at The Fortune to protest a tax unparliamentarily levied to pay for two failed naval campaigns against the Spanish. The protest quickly turned violent when some of the protesters attacked a constable.²² Because of this association between playgoing and unruly crowd behavior, the theaters were sometimes closed to prevent riots. In fact, Ann Jennalie Cook observes, "The lord mayor and aldermen routinely shut down playhouses whenever disorder *threatened*, as in the uprising of 1595."²³

Antitheatrical writers sometimes exploited and furthered this perception that riots and performances were connected by referencing examples where the stage was allegedly responsible for such occasions. Henry Crosse, writing in 1603, uses the precedent of the 1549 riot led by Robert Kett, which was supposedly started during a play, to argue for the negative effects of stage performances:

For what more fitter occasion to summon all the discontented people together, then Playes? to attempt some execrable action, commotions, mutinies, rebellions, as it hapned at *Wyndham* in *Norff.* in the time of *Ed.* the 6. where at a Stage Play...the horrible rebellion of *Ket* and his complices, by a watch-word given, brake out, to the trouble of the whole kingdome.²⁴

By referencing Kett, Crosse is not digging up a half-forgotten historical event. Memory of the rebellion was kept alive by Sir John Cheke's popular and influential recounting of the event. His negative portrayal of crowds in this text was reprinted as late as 1641, and its influence appears in Jonson, Shakespeare, and Holinshed.²⁵ Thus, Crosse is recalling a relatively famous instance of "dangerous" crowd behavior and linking it to playhouse audiences because, according to him, plays simply attract "discontented people," so a playhouse is a natural place for a riot to begin.

Indeed, the playhouses provided the space for the almost perennial Shrovetide riots, when crowds of apprentices gravitated toward the theaters to engage in rowdy and often violent activity. However, it cannot be said that playgoing caused or produced the Shrovetide riots because the theaters were often the object of a riot and not (only) the cause of it. That is, rioters sometimes directed their anger at the playhouses and playing companies, tearing down the buildings and attacking the actors. As early as 1580 and as late as 1630 there are reports of playhouses being attacked by rioting apprentices during the Shrovetide festivals.²⁶ These riots were most frequent between 1606 and 1623, during which time only two festivals did not produce a riot within the vicinity of the playhouses.²⁷

The motivation for these riots remains unclear. Paul S. Seaver argues that the apprentices were enacting the antitheatrical prejudice of their elite masters and that Shrovetide (a traditional time of state-sanctioned misrule) was used by the city as a weapon against the theaters.²⁸ In these cases, the theaters were not punished *for* riots, they were punished *by* riots. Roger B. Manning offers a different explanation that fits with the cultural dominance of the pragmatic theory of performance. He argues that the frequency of the Jacobean Shrovetide riots could be the "inventions of the Jacobean playwrights, which the London apprentices emulated. One wonders to what extent [these] dramatists...may have encouraged the rowdy behaviour of apprentices on their holidays by ridiculing the customs and values of their masters."²⁹ According to this interpretation,

the pragmatic theory did not just threaten the theaters because of the link between the audience's actions and the content of the performance. Rather, the pragmatic theory produced the actions of the audience that directly threatened the playhouses. In any case, the frequency and location of the apprentice riots seem to have helped produce the link between the theaters and unruly crowd behavior within the early modern cultural imagination, a link that was exploited by the antitheatrical writer Crosse and London authorities, and a link that Massinger would want to avoid in his metadramatic meditations on performance's efficacy.

Theater historians have tended to downplay the significance of these riots or disturbances. Cook remarks that despite the association of playgoing with public disorder, "[i]n actuality, only two major disturbances took place inside the theaters"; she points to a Shrove Tuesday riot in 1617 and another "brawl" at the Fortune in 1626; she also cites "lesser incidents...in 1611 and in 1614 and at the Red Bull in 1610, 1622 and 1638."³⁰ Cook does not mention the 1592 incident at the Rose or the 1597 riot at the Swan discussed above. So there were at least four major disturbances in or around the theaters in addition to the numerous lesser incidents she cites and the almost yearly Shrovetide riots. Furthermore, as Andrew Gurr suggests, there may have been more that have not been documented or have not yet been uncovered by scholars.³¹ Still, Cook maintains, "In view of the volatile nature of any crowd, it is amazing that so few incidents are recorded for sizable gatherings, often taking place virtually every day, during a period that spans seven decades."³² Similarly, Gurr remarks, "But considering the alarm so regularly voiced by the civil authorities...the number of affrays that actually engaged audiences inside the playhouse was almost nil."³³

Downplaying these incidents seems warranted if we are viewing them within the context of the hyperbolic rhetoric of the antitheatrical writers, particularly since these scholars are attempting to correct the perception created by the antitheatrical tracts that early modern audiences were consistently and violently disruptive. As Cook notes, "the evidence shows plenty of disruptive behavior, but audiences scarcely merited their detractors' characterization."³⁴ However, if we view these events not as historians but from the perspective of the playwrights and playing companies, these incidents must have been immensely troublesome.

What Gurr calls “disruptive behavior” or “affrays” and Cook calls “lesser incidents” would have been called “riots” in early modern London and would have been taken quite seriously by local authorities. As Alison Wall has shown, the word *riot* was used as a catchall term to describe any unwanted group behavior. In fact, a “[r]iot could mean only three people meeting to attempt an unlawful act, or refusing to go home when ordered to by a magistrate....Some events afterwards described as riots began at recreational events.”³⁵ Wall’s insight suggests that any theatrical event that routinely drew anywhere between 1500 and 3000 people, could retroactively be labeled a riot by the local government even if there was only a minor incident within the playgoing crowd.³⁶

This (over)use of the term can be understood within the context of an acute early modern fear of riots and a broader distrust of crowds in general. As Christopher Hill and others have shown, writers throughout the era, including many dramatists, regularly condemned crowds.³⁷ In the words of Paul Menzer, “the contempt, derision, and bile that writers categorically heaped upon crowds in the drama, sermons, verse, and prose of this period approach a pathology.”³⁸ Indeed, without a police force, the large London crowds (larger than anything previous generations had encountered) appeared to pose a serious threat to the state.³⁹ Wall and other historians have chronicled the numerous early modern riots, many of which were centered in London’s suburbs.⁴⁰ In fact, the year that *The Roman Actor* was first performed saw the beginning of an intense series of London riots, incited by the policies of the Duke of Buckingham.⁴¹ Manning argues that these Caroline riots, though less numerous than the Jacobean riots, were more politically aware, more clearly aimed at monarchical power, and so taken more seriously by the crown and London authorities.⁴²

The fear of riots, and of the playhouse inciting or housing riots, was so strong that even the representation of uprisings (or any other treasonous activity that could lead to insurrection) was forbidden.⁴³ For instance, the state censor often banned playing companies from staging riots. Edmund Tilney’s suppression of the riot scene in the play *The Book of Sir Thomas More* is a famous example of such censorship.⁴⁴ Given the state’s (almost paranoid) worry about uprisings, even a few playhouse riots would have posed a threat to the playhouses. And, perhaps more importantly, the

perception that playgoers or groups pretending to be playgoers had the potential to produce a riot or, worse yet, that playhouse performances could incite riots meant that the playing companies were constantly threatened with closure because of the potential actions of their audiences.

And even when playwrights were not held *legally* responsible for the riotous actions of their audiences, they were almost always held *politically* responsible for the actions of playgoers. As Jean Howard and others have shown, the playhouse was a politically contested public space, where powerful groups who wanted the playhouses closed (the Puritans and London magistrates) struggled against those who wanted them open (the playgoing public and aristocratic patrons).⁴⁵ Writers who expressed antitheatrical positions, such as Anthony Munday, Stephen Gosson, and John Northbrooke, often linked the audience's behavior to the content of playhouse performances just as the Privy Council had during the *Isle of Dogs* incident. Robert Ormsby, drawing on the research of Laura Levine and Barish, describes this antitheatrical argument as "pathological." He argues that "[a]ntitheatrical rhetoric of the era is 'pathological' not simply to the degree that it portrays the actor's body infected by unclean performance, but also in its depictions of audiences diseased by the spectacles they witness."⁴⁶ For instance, John Northbrooke says of plays, "what other thing doe they teache than wanton pleasure, and stirring up of fleshly lustes, unlawfull appetites and desires? [sic] with their bawdie and filthie sayings and counterfeit doings."⁴⁷ Here the "stirring up of fleshly lustes" explicitly refers to a belief that viewing a performance can affect and infect the actions of the audience. Likewise, Munday makes the claim, "at Theaters none of these [the mind, ears, and eyes] but sinneth, for both the mind there with lust; and the [eyes] with showes, and the eares with hearing be polluted."⁴⁸ This model is so common that Cynthia Marshall, echoing Ormsby, claims, "Virtually all the antitheatricalists refer to the effects of the stage as 'infectious.'"⁴⁹

Although the majority of these invectives against the stage were published in the early days of the theater (the 1580s and 90s), and so were penned well before the first performance of *The Roman Actor*, the prolific and sometimes politically powerful Puritan writer William Prynne was still relying on this metaphor in 1633, seven years after Massinger's play was first performed.⁵⁰ Prynne maintains that he cannot, in good

conscience, fully describe what happens onstage because he fears that his readers will become infected by the description; the plays contain such “poysonous filthinesse, I dare not fully anatomize, for feare it should *infect*, not mend the Reader.”⁵¹

Critics have sometimes dismissed these writers as marginal cranks, complaining about a theater that enjoyed overwhelming public support. However, the viral understanding of performance was far from marginal. In fact, because the antitheatrical arguments deploy the same premise (plays affect the actions of the audience) as the pragmatic theory of performance, defenders of the stage also relied on this metaphor. Indeed, as several critics have noticed, defenders of the stage tended to produce similar, but diametrically opposed, arguments as the antitheatrical writers. Katharine Eisaman Maus nicely explains how these opposing arguments fit together: “Both critics and apologists agree, however, that theater... inculcates patterns of behavior in the audience. That is its promise and its danger, depending upon one’s point of view.”⁵² Defenders of the stage argue that the theater produces good behavior, while the antitheatricalists maintain that performance produces bad behavior. But both are relying on a pragmatic or viral view of performance.

Indeed, this understanding of performance is present within *The Roman Actor*. Paris seems to suggest a viral causality to drama by using a humoral metaphor; he poses a rhetorical question about whether the writings of philosophers can “fire / The blood, or swell the veins with emulation / To be both good and great, equal to that / Which is presented on our theatres?” (1.3.80–83). Performances are figuratively able to get inside the audience’s bloodstream and change their behavior. Of course, Paris is unable to make this viral theory work in practice, and one can understand why Massinger would not want to stage a validation of a theory that gave credence to the antitheatricalists’ position and reified the connection between the content of the performance and the (unruly) actions of the audience. Instead, Massinger highlights the way that the audience acts independently and in spite of the content of the performance. By showing how Philargus is unaffected by performance, he could suggest that the theater is unable to alter the behavior of the audience and that the playing companies are not responsible for the unruly

actions of early modern playgoers. By problematizing the pragmatic theory, he could undermine the antitheatrical position. Or to put it another way, if Philargus is unredeemable through a performance, so too are the playhouse audiences. If they riot, then it is the fault of the rioting playgoers, not the fault of the performance. The failure of the pragmatic theory then would have provided Massinger with political cover in the face of the dangers posed by a potentially riotous crowd.

Furthermore, this failure may actually work to structure audience response. That is, Massinger is not only trying to convince the antitheatrical writers that their viral theory of performance is wrong; he is trying to convince his audience that the pragmatic theory of performance is wrong because this theory not only saddled the playwrights with the responsibility of audience actions but encouraged the audience to react to a performance. Playgoers schooled in a humanist theory of literature (that is, the pragmatic theory) would look to plays for models of behavior. By convincing the audience that this theory is wrong, Massinger might be hoping actually to limit these reactions. In other words, he is representing performance's efficacy, or lack thereof, in order to construct it. By staging a fictional playgoer (Philargus) who does not respond to a fictional performance, he is teaching the playhouse audience not to respond to the real performance because he, like other Londoners, worried what that response might entail: his crowd, like other early modern crowds—including the one that gathered outside the Fortune a few months before the first performance of *The Roman Actor*—may riot.

This is not to say that Massinger is explicitly attempting to answer the antitheatrical arguments or that *The Roman Actor* is a direct response to playhouse riots. Rather, I am suggesting that riots in general and playhouse riots in particular occupied a significant place within the early modern cultural imagination and that Massinger was not immune from these anxieties when he reflected on the power, purpose, and efficacy of performance within early modern culture. That is, the early modern distrust and fear of crowds, the precedent of playing companies being punished for the unruly and seditious behavior of their audiences, and the association between playgoers and rioters must have impacted the way that Massinger thought about performance and in fact helps explain his repeated insistence that performances do not affect playgoers' actions.

Thus, I generally agree with the views expressed by Barish and James Bulman that Massinger (and more broadly Caroline drama) felt threatened by a political hostility toward the stage and a cultural anxiety about playgoing.⁵³ As Barish argues, “Committed playwrights like Massinger, during the Caroline years, must have felt their professional futures deeply threatened.”⁵⁴ Joanne Rochester disagrees with this view, noting that “none of these [Caroline] plays exhibit much anxiety.”⁵⁵ However, *The Roman Actor* does seem to express a deep anxiety about audience reaction and the pragmatic theory of performance through its repeated insistence that playgoers are not moved to action by stage performances.

In fact, Massinger registers the anxiety over his audience’s sometimes riotous actions, while maintaining that performances do not cause these actions. Rochester convincingly shows that the torture of the two Stoic senators, Rusticus and Sura, is framed by Massinger as a performance.⁵⁶ If we view this torture as an inset performance, then Parthenius’s concern about its staging of this performance is instructive. He tells Domitia that if the Stoic Senators are tortured in front of “the multitude,” “the sad object may beget compassion / in the giddy rout, and cause some sudden uproar / that may disturb you” (3.2.16; 22–24). As Rochester rightly notes, “Parthenius fears a riot,” but she does not connect this fear to a broader cultural fear of riots and crowds.⁵⁷ The cultural anxiety over playgoing crowds and playhouse riots described above suggests that the object of this fear is not just the fictional inset audience—“the giddy rout”; it is also the unruly playhouse audience.

Significantly, the giddy rout, despite Parthenius’s fear, does not riot. The failure of this inset performance to produce a riot can be read, like Paris’s failure to redeem Philargus, as a strategic and metadramatic failure.⁵⁸ It is designed to construct performance as unable to produce (in this instance, riotous) reactions in the audience. Granted, part of the reason they do not react is because Caesar’s guards are tasked with crowd control. Aretinus, at Caesar’s behest, tells the guards, “carefully observe / The people’s looks. Charge upon any man / That with a sigh or murmur does express / A seeming sorrow for these traitors’ deaths” (3.2.47–50). Perhaps, as Rochester suggests, the panoptic gaze of Caesar and his guards controls the audience.⁵⁹ However, Caesar’s control of his subjects seems to work through secret informants rather than through

the visible surveillance that Foucault traces.⁶⁰ Caesar's surveillance does not necessarily work by threatening subjects before they act, it works by punishing them after they act. For instance, no one knew that Philargus was going to be killed if he did not reform after viewing the first inset play; they only knew he was in danger after he transgressed Caesar's will (this is in part what makes him an old-fashioned tyrant and not an efficient Foucauldian state operator). Likewise, the audience watching the torture scene does not necessarily know it is being watched. Nevertheless, no one responds to the spectacle. Perhaps the reason they do not riot is the same reason that Philargus does not reform: performance, within the fictive world of this play, does not have the ability to produce actions in the audience. Despite Parthenius's, the Puritans', and London Magistrates' worries about the efficacy of drama, performances, says Massinger, do not actually have the ability to affect audience behavior—for good or ill. They cannot inspire virtue in the audience, as the first inset play shows, nor can they incite riots, as the second inset performance demonstrates.

If we accept that Massinger is attempting to limit audience response by staging inset performances that problematize the pragmatic theory of performance, then we reach an interesting paradox: Massinger is attempting to influence audience behavior through a performance in order not to influence audience behavior through performance. Therefore, he is attempting to convince the audience that the pragmatic theory of performance does not work, but he is doing so by relying on the theory's premise that audience behavior can be affected through performance. Or put another way, Massinger uses the pragmatic theory in order to undo it.

Massinger seems aware of this paradox and explores it within the second inset play, *Iphis and Anaxarete*, while again insisting that performances do not affect the audience. In this inset play, there is actually another inset performance (a performance within a play within a play), which again dramatizes an audience remaining unmoved or unaffected by a performance. Iphis, played by Paris, woos Anaxarete, played by Domitilla, through a piece of melodrama, in which he tells her that he will kill himself if she continues to scorn him. Her response foregrounds the self-reflectivity of the scene: "I shall look on your *tragedy* unmoved" (3.2.266, emphasis mine). I have been suggesting throughout that we read

Massinger's metadrama as an attempt to frame the playgoing experience for his audience. From this critical perspective, the inset performance with the second inset play is another clear example of an attempt to convince the audience to remain "unmoved" or "unaltered" by a performance. That is, just as Anaxarete is unmoved by Iphis's performance, so too should the audience of *Iphis and Anaxarete* be unmoved by Paris's and Domitilla's performance. In other words, while the first inset play (*The Cure for Avarice*) provides a test case for the pragmatic theory of performance, the second inset play (*Iphis and Anaxarete*) and its inset performance (Iphis's attempted suicide) provide a test case for Massinger's theory of performance as put forth in the first inset play. This time the play is asking: can a performance convince an audience not to be moved by a performance?

The results of this second test case are more complicated than the first because this inset play's purpose and object are unclear and its outcome is ambiguous. *The Cure for Avarice* has a clear object and a clear purpose; within the fictive frame of the play (not the metadramatic frame that I highlighted above), the first inset play is explicitly staged to cure Philargus of his greed and miserly behavior. The object and purpose of *Iphis and Anaxarete* are less clear. Domitia tells Caesar that the play will be staged to "banish [his] melancholy" (3.2.130). However, Caesar's melancholy was brought on by his inability to break the Stoic senators' will during the torture scene (3.2.47–128), and Domitia started preparing the play much earlier, directly after seeing *The Cure for Avarice*. She also states that by forcing Domitilla to play the part of Anaxarete, she can humiliate her, but this effect of the performance seems more like a fringe benefit than a purpose, and in any case, it is an effect on the performer rather than the audience.

Perhaps Domitia hints at the real purpose of the play when she first suggests its production; she tells Caesar that while she enjoyed Paris's performance, "he would perform / A lover's part much better" (2.1.415–16). And while watching the first play, she muses through an aside, "If [Paris] were indeed a doctor, as the play says, / He should be sworn my servant, govern my slumbers, / And minister to me waking" (2.1.328–30). Domitia clearly desires Paris, as Caenis guesses after Paris's initial performance (3.2.93–95), and the rest of the court (except Caesar) realizes after the second performance. Her desire for Paris suggests that she

wants to stage *Iphis and Anaxarete* so that she can cast him in a more easily sexualized role, “a lover’s part.” The performance then is pornographic: the object of the performance is Domitia and the purpose is to inflame her desire. She tells Paris as much after the performance. In the midst of her seduction, she admits to him that she pretends to believe that he “must be really, in some degree, / The thing thou dost present” (4.2.38–39). Ira Clark and Charles Pastoor contend that these lines show Domitia’s naiveté since she is confusing the actor for the character, or reality for fiction, but her confusion appears to be an act, a part of her seduction.⁶¹ Actually, Paris seems more naïve than Domitia when he needlessly explains to her how acting works (4.2.43–52), after which, the exasperated Domitia is forced to give up the game:

Come, you would put on
A wilful ignorance, and not understand
What ‘tis we point at. Must we in plain language,
Against the decent modesty of our sex,
Say that we love thee, love thee to enjoy thee. (4.2.52–56)

In other words, Domitia is trying to be coy and playful by staging these elaborate pornographic games, in part because she had been attempting to be modest, but also, no doubt, because she enjoyed the game; she liked seeing him play the “lover’s part.”

If we view the performance of *Iphis and Anaxarete* as designed to inflame the desire of Domitia, then this inset play has a similar purpose to that of the inset performance within the play. That is, Iphis’s performance of suicide is meant to produce desire in Anaxarete just as Paris’s performance (as Iphis) is intended to produce desire in Domitia. In fact, Massinger seems to go out of his way to draw similarities between the two performances. Both are referred to as tragedies (3.2.134; 3.2.266), and both plays contain similar class dynamics. When Anaxarete rejects Iphis, she makes sure to point out their class differences: “But thou couldst nourish any flattering hope / One of my height in youth, in birth and fortune, / Could e’er descend to look upon thy lowness (3.2.241–43). And while Domitia is seducing Paris, she also makes sure to point out their different social positions: “If from the height of majesty we can / Look down upon thy lowness and embrace it” (4.2.59–60).

There is, of course, a key difference between the performances. Anaxarete, as I previously pointed out, is unmoved by Iphis's performance, but Domitia is clearly moved by Paris's performance of Iphis. As Paris/Iphis is threatening to kill himself, she interrupts the performance, exclaiming "Not for the world! / Restrain him, as you love your lives" (3.2.281–82). After this outburst, Parthenius, Julia, and Domitilla come to the by now obvious conclusion that Domitia desires Paris. Her outburst and their interpretation of the outburst suggest the play has accomplished its purpose: to produce lust in Domitia. Furthermore, Julia and Parthenius describe her outburst in terms that point out the discrepancy between the effect of Iphis's performance within the fictive world of *Iphis and Anaxarete* and the effect of Paris's performance within the fictive world of *The Roman Actor*:

Julia: You observed not
 (As it appears) the violence of her passion
 When, personating Iphis, he pretended—
 For your contempt, fair Anaxarete—
 To hang himself.
Parthenius: Yes, yes, I noted that;
 But never could imagine it could work her
 To such a strange intemperance of affection
 As to dote on him. (4.1.2–10)

The performance produces "contempt" within the play, but produces "affection" in reality (or at least within the fictive reality of *The Roman Actor*); while Anaxarete is unmoved, Domitia is decidedly moved.

Thus, it appears that Massinger's initial gambit fails. He originally tries to convince the audience *not* to be moved by a performance by moving them through a performance. However, this paradoxical and metadramatic process is shown to be a failure by Massinger himself within this second inset play. Domitia is not convinced to be unmoved by the performance even though the performance is attempting to teach her not to be moved. She remains a reactive playgoer despite the performance framing the playgoing experience as being unable to produce a reaction.

Looked at another way, this failure, in and of itself, becomes a sort of backhanded reaffirmation of Massinger's initial gambit since Domitia's

failure to be moved by Anaxarete's failure to be moved is fictional proof that performance cannot influence audience behavior. The audience, that is, the *real* audience in the playhouse watching *The Roman Actor*, is left in an odd and terribly complex position. They are being shown that performance cannot affect their behavior, but they are also being shown that what they are being shown cannot, in fact, convince them that performance cannot affect behavior. The latter illustration both denies and affirms the prior illustration, but the denial and the affirmation both suggest the fundamental ineffectiveness of the theater. Needless to say, the pragmatic theory's clear connection between audience actions and performance has been thoroughly problematized through these complex metadramatic games.

That being said, it is not exactly clear whether Domitia is actually moved by the performance of *Iphis and Anaxarete* to begin with; this inset performance may be showing, again, that performances do not have the ability to produce audience reaction. After all, she desired Paris before the performance, and even though the play was designed to win her affection, she produced the performance herself. She seems to be staging the play in order to seduce herself, but in order to do so she must have already been seduced, at least partially. Put more simply, while the performance certainly inflamed her desire, it was not the cause of it. So perhaps—despite the observations of Parthenius and Julia, who did not know that Domitia was already in love with Paris before the performance—Domitia was not really responding to the performance. She was simply acting on a prior desire. Her reaction to the performance is perhaps more similar to Philargus's reaction than it appears. Neither playgoer is moved by the performance to alter his or her initial behavior. Rochester comes close to this conclusion when she observes that in *Iphis and Anaxarete*, “a presentation of virtuous love produces vicious passion in the audience: Domitia incorrectly imitates the stage just as Philargus incorrectly refuses to imitate it.”⁶² Rochester seems right in her assertion that Domitia does not correctly imitate Anaxarete, but if Domitia is not correctly imitating the stage character, can it be said that she is imitating? There does not seem to be a great deal of difference between “incorrectly” imitating and “refusing” to imitate. If I am asked by a yoga instructor to imitate yoga pose X, and instead produce yoga pose Y, can I be said to have imitated the

instructor at all? Would it not be equally accurate to say that I am simply performing whatever pose I want? Likewise, Domitia is not imitating the play; she is simply doing what she wants—lusting after Paris. The play does not produce this reaction any more than the first inset play produces a reaction in Philargus; both audiences remain unmoved or unaltered by the performance. Looked at from this perspective, the audience is again reminded that performances do not impact audience behavior.

Given the complex portrayal of audience reaction and the thoughtful dramatization of the efficacy of performance within the first two inset plays, the lack of interest in audience within the last inset play, *The False Servant*, is puzzling. In the previous two inset plays, the performance is interrupted by asides or interjections by audience members, but in this performance, the audience is not heard from because, presumably, there is no inset audience (there is, of course, always the playhouse audience watching the play and the inset play simultaneously). The only characters onstage during this performance are the actors: Paris, Aesopus, Latinus, a boy, who plays the role of the Lady, and Caesar, who ends up playing the role of “the injured lord.” And, unlike the first two inset plays, the purpose of the inset play is not to produce a reaction but rather to give Caesar an opportunity to kill Paris. Caesar clearly reveals the function of the play after he stabs Paris; he tells the actor, “’twas my purpose” (4.2.284). The object of the performance has moved from the audience to the players themselves.

If we accept my suggestion that the first two inset plays and the inset performances that exist in and around these plays are designed to show the playhouse audience and the theater’s enemies that performances do not have the power to influence audience behavior or to move playgoers to action, then this lack of interest in audience reaction makes sense. The third inset play does not attempt to produce audience reaction because such a goal has been thoroughly shown to be impossible and—from the playing companies’ perspective—undesirable. The lack of an audience, and consequently the lack of any effort to produce audience reaction, becomes the final, and perhaps most devastating, rejection of the pragmatic theory of performance. After suggesting that it is impossible to affect audience behavior, the play seems to be asking: why even try to influence the audience? Indeed, why even have one?

We are left then to wonder: what is the purpose of performance? It seems as if Massinger is putting forth a theory without a praxis, thereby leaving the playwright and playing companies (as well as the audience) in a paradoxical position. In order to save the theaters from the threats posed by audience reactions, he has drained stage performances of significance, thereby threatening the stage with self-imposed irrelevance. He has killed the theater in order to save it.

While I do not believe the play offers a clear solution to this contradiction between the desire of the playing companies to matter and their need to limit audience reaction (indeed, perhaps there is not one), the fifth act does seem to reflect on this problem and explores a nonpragmatic purpose of performance. The final act and the inset performances within this act suggest that performances have the ability to produce private, interior thoughts, rather than public exterior actions.⁶³ After severing the link between gnosis and praxis, Massinger focuses solely on the gnosis of performance. For Massinger, it seems, viewing should be a contemplative, interior experience devoid of audience action.⁶⁴ That is, performances produce knowledge only for the sake of knowledge. And more specifically, they produce self-knowledge.

The final act, as Rochester notes, focuses almost exclusively on Caesar, specifically on "the workings of his guilty and fearful psyche."⁶⁵ The audience is made privy to these inner workings through three soliloquies and one dream sequence. Nowhere else in the play are characters given this much interiority. It would be a stretch to say that Caesar's interior life is produced by performances. His guilt over killing Paris, the realization that his wife does not love him, and his belief, after a visit from the oracle, that he is about to die are all likely reasons for this turn inward.

However, an inset performance does seem to contribute to Caesar's interiority, which suggests a link between performance and interior thought. Within Caesar's dream, the dead Stoic senators reappear and perform a dumb show, waving bloody swords over his head. After awaking from the show, Caesar launches into his final soliloquy, which contains some of his most self-aware moments:

Yes, live, and have discourse to know myself
Of gods and men forsaken. What accuser
Within me cries aloud, I have deserved it,

In being just to neither? Who dares speak this?
 Am I not Caesar?—How! Again repeat it?
 Presumptuous traitor, thou shalt die!—What traitor?
 He that hath been a traitor to himself
 And stands convicted here. Yet who can sit
 A competent judge o'er Caesar? Caesar. Yes,
 Caesar by Caesar's sentenced, and must suffer. (5.1.188–97)

He awakes, or we might say he leaves the performance, with the ability to “know [him]self,” which leads to a dialogue with himself through which he struggles to understand his own tyranny and comes to a recognition that his melancholy is in actuality his own consciousness accusing himself, the only individual powerful enough to accuse a monarch. This last performance seems to do what the other performances could not accomplish: it gets the viewing subject to acknowledge his or her own guilt. But it does not accomplish this feat by representing a mirror image of the audience, which encourages them to change their behavior; it does so by creating an interior space, where the viewing subject can explore his own psyche without the compulsion to act on this self-knowledge.

Indeed, after coming to this self-realization, Caesar does not really change his course of action. After he is convinced by his subjects that the oracle is probably wrong, he seems to behave as he always has. For instance, one of his soldiers remarks, “Now Caesar's heard like Caesar” (5.2.40), and before he is interrupted by Parthenius, he seems to be in the process of plotting revenge on his enemies (5.2.40–44). Action (reformed or otherwise) is not the result of this performance; the effect is self-realization. Caesar is still Caesar, but he is now self-aware. While this scene explores the nonpragmatic effects of performance on the audience, Caesar is an unlikely character to provide a model of playgoing. After all, he is a tyrant throughout the play, and his portrayal is a mostly conventional and largely unsympathetic early modern depiction of the historical Caesar.⁶⁶ Massinger's Caesar is like Shakespeare's Caesar: he can see the error of his ways, but cannot act on his own self-knowledge. Thus, Caesar is neither an ideal character nor a playgoer to be imitated, any more than the miser Philargus is an ideal playgoer. But imitation is

beside the point; Massinger is not suggesting that the audience imitate anything they see on the stage since imitation is a reaction predicated on the pragmatic theory he has rejected.

What Caesar and Philargus are showing the audience is what is possible through a performance. In the first performance, Philargus is shown, in the tradition of the pragmatic theory, a mirror of himself and a figure to imitate but remains unmoved and tragically unaware of his own vice. In this final performance, Caesar is not asked to imitate what he sees (any more than the playhouse audience is asked to imitate Caesar), but he is asked to reflect on what he sees and as a result gains self-knowledge. Performance can produce knowledge but not actions. Massinger seems to be putting forth a playgoing experience that foregrounds thoughts over actions, gnosis over praxis. By rejecting the pragmatic theory of performance, Massinger was not only protecting the theater from its audience, but he was also dramatizing a new viewing experience, an experience that valued the knowledge gleaned from a performance for its own sake.

Some critics have maintained that *The Roman Actor* is an anomaly. If so, we can assume that this play is unique in its rejection of the pragmatic theory of performance. Edward Rocklin, for one, suggests that “[t]here is a sense in which *The Roman Actor* is more pessimistic about the power of art to correct and inform its audience than any other play written between 1580 and 1642.”⁶⁷ Rocklin does not provide examples to support his claim, but even within Massinger’s canon, this “pessimistic” view of performance is not unique. Massinger seems to repeat his rejection of the pragmatic theory six years later in *The City Madam*. Like the first inset performance in *The Roman Actor*, these inset performances (a musical performance and a dumb show) are staged to reform a miser (Luke) and again the performance fails to achieve its purpose. Like Philargus, Luke remains unrepentant; he claims:

This move me to compassion, or raise
One sign of seeming pity in my face?
You are deciev’d. It rather renders me
More flinty, and obdurate. (5.3.61–64)⁶⁸

And Massinger was not alone. Plays throughout the early modern period, such as Richard Brome's *The Antipodes* (1640), John Webster's *The Duchess of Malfi* (1612), George Chapman, Ben Jonson, and John Marston's *Eastward Ho* (1605), and Christopher Marlowe's *Tamburlaine* (1588), all seem to suggest that performance is not linked to audience action. For instance, Brome's play is essentially one long inset performance. The purpose of this performance is to cure the main character, Peregrine, of wanderlust. Peregrine, however, is an actor and not a member of the inset audience. Thus, the performance is designed to affect the actor rather than the audience. And although the play succeeds (that is, it cures Peregrine), the inset audience remains unaffected. Likewise, in *The Duchess of Malfi*, an inset performance is staged (this time a dumb show), which depicts the banishment of the two main characters, the Duchess and her husband, Antonio. Webster has two pilgrims watch the performance, but these audience members leave after the performance is over and are never heard from again, apparently unmoved, unaffected, and unaltered by the fictive actions they witnessed (3.4). It seems that Massinger was not the only playwright uneasy about the pragmatic theory's link between audience action and performance.

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NOTES

¹ For works that note the similarities between *Hamlet* and *The Roman Actor*, see Charles Pastoor, "Metadramatic Performances in *Hamlet* and *The Roman Actor*," *The Philological Review* 32 (2006): 1–19 (3), and Werner Habicht, "Traps of Illusion in Massinger's *The Roman Actor*," in *The Show Within: Dramatic and Other Insets*, ed. François Laroque (Montpellier: Université Paul-Valéry, 1992), 359. I will briefly return to this comparison toward the end of this essay. This quotation and all subsequent quotations are taken from Philip Massinger, *The Roman Actor*, ed. Martin White (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007).

² See Habicht for a comprehensive discussion of the critical interpretation of this scene; he illustrates that early scholarship saw the play as a defense against antitheatrical Puritan attacks, but critics later started to focus on the disjunction between Paris's speech and the effectiveness of the inset plays, which suggest a suspicion of the power of the stage to reform the audience. Jonas Barish pushes the "misunderstanding" of Paris's speech back to seventeenth-century responses to the play. Habicht, 360; Barish, "Three Caroline 'Defenses' of the Stage," in *Comedy from Shakespeare to Sheridan: Change and Continuity in the English and European Dramatic Tradition*, ed. A. R. Braunmuller and J. C. Bulman (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1986), 194–212.

³ Richard A. Burt, "'Tis Writ by Me': Massinger's *The Roman Actor* and the Politics of Reception in English Renaissance Theatre," *Theatre Journal* 40 (1988): 332–46 (338–39).

⁴ Jonas Barish, "Three Caroline 'Defenses,'" 194–212.

⁵ For instance, Barish calls the speech an "anthology of arguments in behalf of drama's ethical mission," Douglas Howard describes it as "conventional," Habicht and Pastoor both note that the speech draws on commonplace debates and arguments, and Joanne Rochester (drawing on Barish) observes that much of the speech is culled from Heywood's *Apology for Actors*. Barish, "Three Caroline 'Defenses,'" 96; Howard, "Massinger's Political Tragedies," in *Philip Massinger: A Critical Reassessment*, ed. Douglas Howard (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 123; Habicht, 359; Pastoor, 2; Rochester, *Staging Spectatorship in the Plays of Philip Massinger* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2010), 24. See also David A. Reinheimer, "The Roman Actor, Censorship, and Dramatic Autonomy," *SEL* 38 (1998): 317–32 (320), and C. A. Gibson, "Massinger's Use of His Sources for *The Roman Actor*," *AUMLA* 15 (1961): 60–72 (65).

⁶ Barish, "Three Caroline 'Defenses,'" esp. 201.

⁷ For those who view Massinger as skeptical of the traditional view of drama, see Pastoor, Howard, "Massinger's Political Tragedies," and Rochester, 15–52. For those who argue that Paris is a tragic figure, see Habicht; Doris Adler, *Philip Massinger* (Boston: Twayne, 1987), 67–69; A. P. Hogan, "Imagery of Acting in *The Roman Actor*," *The Modern Language Review* 66 (1971): 273–81; Patricia Thomson, "World Stage and Stage in Massinger's *Roman Actor*," *Neophilologus* 54 (1970): 408–25; Barish, 194–212; and Reinheimer, 317–32.

⁸ Pierce Penniless, *An Apology for Actors*, *The Art of English Poesy*, and "The Defense of Poesy," respectively.

⁹ Sir Philip Sidney, *An Apology for Poetry, or The Defense of Poesy*, ed. Geoffrey Shepherd, rev. and expanded by R. W. Maslen, 3rd ed. (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2002), 81–117 (88).

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 95.

¹² M. H. Abrams, *The Mirror and the Lamp: Romantic Theory and the Critical Tradition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1953), 15.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 15–16.

¹⁴ For works that illustrate the profound effect of humanism on early modern playwrights, see Kent Cartwright, *Theatre and Humanism: English Drama in the Sixteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), and Robin Headlam Wells, *Shakespeare's Humanism* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

¹⁵ Quoted in Dorothy Auchter, *Dictionary of Literary and Dramatic Censorship in Tudor and Stuart England* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2001), 172.

¹⁶ *Ibid.* See also Glynne Wickham, "The Privy Council Order of 1597 for the Destruction of All London's Theatres," in *The Elizabethan Theatre*, ed. David Galloway (Hamden, CT: Archon, 1969).

¹⁷ In fact, Wickham argues that this was the ultimate purpose of the threat to close the theaters. That is, he believes that the Privy Council never intended for the theaters to be closed permanently, but rather issued the order as part of a negotiation with the Lord Mayor to regulate and control the theaters. But for the purposes of this study, even if the Privy Council's threat to close the theaters was empty (and I am not sure it was), the *Isle of Dogs* incident still can be seen as contributing to the destruction of several companies via these negotiations.

¹⁸ This description of the riot is taken from Christine Eccles, *The Rose Theatre* (New York: Routledge, 1990), 29–30, and Roger B. Manning, *Village Revolts: Social Protest and Popular Disturbances in England, 1509–1640* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988), 207.

¹⁹ For a description of the subversive nature of the suburbs, or liberties, see Steven Mullaney, *The Place of the Stage: License, Play and Power in Renaissance England* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988).

²⁰ The Privy Council preferred the latter reason. It claimed that the rioters “assembled themselves by occasion & pretence of their meeting at a play.” Quoted in Eccles, 29.

²¹ Andrew Gurr, *Playgoing in Shakespeare's London*, 3rd ed. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 56.

²² Manning, 215. According to Martin White, *The Roman Actor* was probably composed in the latter half of 1626. *The Roman Actor*, 18.

²³ Ann Jennalie Cook, “Audiences,” in *A New History of Early English Drama*, ed. John D. Cox and David Scott Kastan (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), 312. For more on the disruptive activities of playgoers, see Cook, *The Privileged Playgoers of Shakespeare's London* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1981), 249–59.

²⁴ Henry Crosse, *Virtues Commonwealth* (London, 1603), Q1^v.

²⁵ Frederick Tupper Jr., “The Shakespeare Mob,” *PMLA* 27 (1912): 486–523 (493).

²⁶ For descriptions of these riots, see Paul S. Seaver, “Apprentice Riots in Early Modern England,” in *Violence, Politics and Gender in Early Modern England*, ed. Joseph P. Ward (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 29–30; K. J. Lindley, “Riot Prevention and Control in Early Stuart London,” *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 5th ser., 33 (1983): 110–16; Manning, 187–219.

²⁷ Manning, 211.

²⁸ Seaver, 29–30.

²⁹ Manning, 212.

³⁰ Cook, “Audiences,” 312.

³¹ In fact, Gurr reasonably concludes that more “affrays” took place than were documented since not all disturbances at the playhouse would have drawn the attention of local authorities. Gurr, 56.

³² Cook, “Audiences,” 313.

³³ Gurr, 56.

³⁴ Cook, “Audiences,” 313. See also, Paul Menzer, “Crowd Control,” in *Imagining the Audience in Early Modern Drama, 1558–1642*, ed. Jennifer A. Low and Nova Myhill (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 19–36, esp. 24–25.

³⁵ Alison Wall, *Power and Protest in England 1525–1640* (London: Arnold, 2000), 146.

³⁶ For the size of early modern audiences, see Gurr, *Playgoing*, 25, and Cook, *The Privileged Playgoers*, 190–91.

³⁷ Christopher Hill, “The Many-Headed Monster,” in *Change and Continuity in Seventeenth-Century England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975), 181–204; C. A. Patrides, “‘The beast with many heads’: Views on the Multitude,” in *Premises and Motifs in Renaissance Thought*

and Literature (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1982), 124–36; Tupper, 486–523; Brent Stirling, *The Populace in Shakespeare* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1949). This list of works is mostly taken from Menzer, notes 11 and 12.

³⁸ Menzer, 22.

³⁹ For the size and rapid growth of London, see Gurr, 59; Manning, 189–90; and Roger Finlay, *Population and Metropolis: The Demography of London 1580–1650* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 6.

⁴⁰ Wall. See also Manning; John Walter, *Crowds and Popular Politics in Early Modern England* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2006); Andy Wood, *Riot, Rebellion and Popular Politics in Early Modern England* (New York: Palgrave, 2002); David Underdown, *Revel, Riot and Rebellion: Popular Politics and Culture in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987); and Ian W. Archer, *The Pursuit of Stability: Social Relations in Elizabethan London* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991).

⁴¹ Between 1626 and 1628, fifteen riots broke out in London. Manning, 189.

⁴² Manning, 214.

⁴³ For a discussion of the laws governing the representation of treasonous activity, see Rebecca Lemon, *Treason by Words: Literature, Law, and Rebellion* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2006), and Karen Cunningham, *Imaginary Betrayals: Subjectivity and the Discourses of Treason in Early Modern England* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002).

⁴⁴ For some of the accounts of the censorship of *The Book of Sir Thomas More*, see Auchter, 320–23; Richard Dutton, *Mastering the Revels: The Regulation and Censorship of English Renaissance Drama* (Iowa City: Iowa University Press, 1991), 81–86; and Janet Clare, “Art made tongue-tied by authority”: *Elizabethan and Jacobean Dramatic Censorship* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1990), 30–37.

⁴⁵ Jean Howard, *The Stage and Social Struggle in Early Modern England* (New York: Routledge, 1994). There are, of course, numerous studies interested in the political aspects of early modern drama, too many to cite here.

⁴⁶ Robert Ormsby, “*Coriolanus*, Antitheatricalism, and Audience Response,” *Shakespeare Bulletin* 26 (2008): 43–67 (47). Ormsby is drawing on Jonas Barish, *The Antitheatrical Prejudice* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981), esp. 66–155, and Laura Levine, *Men in Women's Clothing: Anti-theatricality and Effeminization, 1579–1642* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994). See also Louis Montrose's *The Purpose of Playing: Shakespeare and the Cultural Politics of the Elizabethan Theatre* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 48–49.

⁴⁷ John Northbrooke, *Spiritus est Vicarius Christi in Terra: A Treatise Against Dicing, Dancing, Plays, and Interludes with Other Idle Pastimes* (London, 1577), 65.

⁴⁸ The word “eyes” in brackets is an extrapolation; the original is illegible. Anthony Munday, *A Second and Third Blast of Retreat from Plays and Theaters* (London, 1580), 1.

⁴⁹ Cynthia Marshall, *Shattering of the Self: Violence, Subjectivity, and Early Modern Texts* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002), 17.

⁵⁰ Prynne's influence is hard to estimate. He was dismissed by some as a buffoon, but was also given positions of authority. According to William Lamont, he was “the official apologist for

Parliament in the Civil War" (21). And as a result of breaking with Parliament over the killing of Charles I, he was made Keeper of the Records by Charles II after the Restoration. For a biography of Prynne, see Lamont, *Puritanism and Historical Controversy* (London: UCL Press, 1996), 15–26.

⁵¹ William Prynne, *Histrio-mastix* (London, 1633), 166. Emphasis mine. Prynne's italics have been omitted.

⁵² Katharine Eisaman Maus, *Inwardness and Theater in the English Renaissance* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 74. See also, Levine, *Men in Women's Clothing*, 22, and Barish, *The Anti-Theatrical Prejudice*, 117.

⁵³ Barish, "Three Caroline 'Defenses,'" and James Bulman, "Caroline Drama," in *The Cambridge Companion to English Renaissance Drama*, ed. A. R. Braunmuller and Michael Hattaway (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 344–71. See also, Reinheimer, esp. 318–20.

⁵⁴ Barish, "Three Caroline 'Defenses,'" 196.

⁵⁵ Rochester, 6.

⁵⁶ Rochester, 31–37. Bill Angus also notes this scene's self-reflexivity. Angus, "The Roman Actor, Metadrama, Authority, and the Audience," *SEL* 50 (2010): 445–65 (447).

⁵⁷ Rochester, 32.

⁵⁸ In fact, Parthenius describes the performance in terms that highlight the metadrama of the scene: "the spectacle is so horrid" (3.2.84).

⁵⁹ Rochester, 35.

⁶⁰ Foucault's ideas about surveillance can be found in *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Random House, 1979).

⁶¹ Ira Clark, *The Moral Art of Philip Massinger* (Lewisburg, PA: Bucknell University Press, 1993), 73–74; Pastoor, 10.

⁶² Rochester, 39. Habicht also notes, "instead of delight, profit and the virtuous inspiration that such a play ought to provide according to the theory, it breeds [in Domitia] a vicious and doubly adulterous passion" (365).

⁶³ I am not attempting to enter into the complicated debate over the existence of inwardness, interiority, or subjectivity in the early modern era. However, I would like to suggest that by separating performance and action, Massinger was gesturing toward a theory of performance that at the very least allowed for a private, interior viewing experience, and that this experience is being dramatized in front of the audience through Caesar's experience with performance. For this debate over interiority, see New Historicists and cultural materialists such as Catherine Belsey, *The Subject of Tragedy: Identity and Difference in Renaissance Drama* (New York: Routledge, 1991), Stephen Greenblatt, *Renaissance Self-Fashioning: From More to Shakespeare* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980), Alan Sinfield, *Faultlines: Cultural Materialism and the Politics of Dissident Reading* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), and Jonathan Dollimore, *Radical Tragedy: Religion, Ideology, and Power in the Drama of Shakespeare*, 3rd ed. (Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004). For works that push against these arguments, see Maus, *Inwardness*, Robert Ellrodt, *Seven Metaphysical Poets: A Structural Study of the Unchanging Self* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), Wells, and Terry G. Sherwood, *The Self in Early Modern Literature: For the Common Good* (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 2007).

⁶⁴ This focus on gnosis can also be seen as undoing Sidney's argument that poetry is superior to philosophy and history because poetry is able to produce action, whereas the other disciplines only produce knowledge: "Now therein of all sciences ... is our poet the monarch. For he doth not only show the way, but giveth so sweet a prospect into the way, as will entice any man to enter into it" (226).

⁶⁵ Rochester, 46.

⁶⁶ For a description of how Massinger uses and departs from a conventional portrayal of Caesar, see John E. Curran Jr., "Fletcher, Massinger, and Roman Imperial Character," *Comparative Drama* 43 (2009): 317–54, esp. 339–41.

⁶⁷ Edward L. Rocklin, "Placing the Audience at Risk: Realizing the Design of Massinger's *The Roman Actor*," in *Acts of Criticism: Performance Matters in Shakespeare and His Contemporaries*, ed. Paul Nelsen and June Schlueter (Madison, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2006), 144–58 (146).

⁶⁸ Philip Massinger, *The City Madam*, ed. Cyrus Hoy (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1964). This inset performance is more complicated than the first inset performance within *The Roman Actor* because Luke, unlike Philargus, eventually reforms; however, the play makes clear that it is not the fictional performances that affect Luke, but rather real-life examples. After the performances fail to affect him, Luke asks John (the individual directing the performances) to show him "Some other object, if / your art can show it" (5.3.75–76). Instead of staging another fictional performance, John tells him that he will show him "one thing real" (5.3.77). John then has Luke watch two real characters (Anne and Mary)—and not a fictional performance—ask for forgiveness from their husbands. This display of repentance convinces Luke to reform. The play's conclusion about the efficacy of performance seems clear—fictional stage performances cannot affect the audience, even though real-life examples can.